

Standards and Assessment

Parents as well as students and educators are vital stakeholders in standards and assessment and share in the responsibility of learning and assessment with their children. Likewise, in order to be responsible parents need to be informed by schools and districts of the assessments and standards their children will need to meet. The community should also be involved in order to support the work of families in this area.

Access to the information generated from the state and district level assessments was highlighted as a major necessity for program participants. Educational jargon, delay in test result reporting as well as accessibility through internet platforms were cited as barriers to access to assessment data.

Current GLE/GSE's were supported by participants with new inclusions. A more holistic approach to the child beyond academics was a main concern. Social and emotional growth as well as creativity was valued by the group. Academically speaking, participants noted that subjects such as geography, world languages and social studies should be part of standards and assessments. Inquiry learning should be the primary means of delivery for all academic areas.

Some participants were concerned that there are too many assessments. Not only are students exhausted, but "teaching to the test" was cited numerous times. Teaching to the test not only ignores multiple learning styles but also dismisses creativity, encourages memorization and shortchanges foundational knowledge all students need.

Curriculum derived from the current state standards is too fragmented among the state's districts. Many participants mentioned a state-wide, RIDE mandated curriculum. Several participants mentioned local control as being unnecessary. Curriculum could also be regionalized through programmatic changes. Collaboration among all stakeholders in education and the community was emphasized. A state-standard PBGR was also mentioned.

Diverse populations such as special education, at-risk and gifted were mentioned as needing special attention. Participants were concerned that current state assessments did not meet the needs of the aforementioned students. For special education students in particular, the ability of the state assessment to address "life skills" was questioned. Assessments could identify at an early grade at risk students through examination of elementary literacy scores. Alternative pathways for at risk students such as vocational education, personalized curriculum and a longer or differently scheduled school year were all suggested. Lastly, there were concerns that high achieving or gifted students were not being sufficiently challenged.

State educational standards were mentioned as a way to increase rigor in class work and in curriculum. Students are seen as not having sufficient challenges in their schoolwork. There was general agreement that students need to be achieving a higher level on state assessment and this should also be reflected in the state standards.